

Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, written and compiled by Roddy Maclean, and specifically aimed at Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Roddy can be contacted by e-mail at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk**

O chionn mìos, dh’innis mi dhuibh mu dheidhinn fear, Ruairidh MacIlleathain (nach robh càirdeach dhomh), a bha na bhàillidh air oighreachd Ard Rois ann an taobh sear Siorrachd Rois. Bha sgeulachd neo dhà aige, a bha glè inntinneach, mu dheidhinn daoine anns an sgìre sin. Tha mi a’ dol a dh’innse dhuibh mu dheidhinn fear aca – buachaille a bha a’ fuireach is ag obair ann. Chanadh daoine an-diugh gur e “caractar” a bh’ ann, ach ’s dòcha aig an àm gur e “sìlaoigh-tear” a chanadh daoine ris!

Cha do dh’fhàgadh ainm air a shon is, mar sin, canaidh mi dìreach “am buachaille” ris. Tha a’ chiad sgeulachd mu dheidhinn mar a rinn am buachaille a’ chùis air tuathanach beartach. Bha an sgìre a’ fuiling, ann an ochd ceud deug ’s a h-ochd deug (1818), le dìth-bìdh, air sgàth ’s nach do dh’fhàs am bàrr gu math air a’ bhliadhna roimhe.

Chaidh am buachaille a bhruidhinn ris an tuathanach bheartach, agus dh’iarr e air min a thoirt dha air creideas. ’S e sin gum pàigheadh e air a son uaireigin ged nach pàigheadh e sa mhionaid. Chan eil fhios a’ m co-dhiubh ’s e min-choirce neo min-eòrna a bh’ ann, agus chan eil e gu diofar don sgeulachd co-dhiù.

Bha an tuathanach dhen amharas nach fhaigheadh e sgillinn airson na mine, agus chuir e deuchainn air a’ bhuachaille. “Dè,” dh’fhaighnich e, “dè an gnothach a b’ fheàrr is a b’ ealanta a rinn thu a-riamh?”

“A, uill,” fhreagair am buachaille, “a bheil cuimhn’ agad gun do chaill thu mart dubh turas? Bha mart a dhìth ort an uairsin, agus thàinig thu thugam-sa an ceann greis agus cheannaich thu mart breac bhuam. Uill, ’s e an aon bheathach a bh’ anns na dhà!”

Bha an tuathanach airson faighinn a-mach ciamar a rinn am buachaille a’ chùis air. Thabhann e bolla mine dha, an asgaidh, nan innseadh e sin dha. “Furasta!” fhreagair am buachaille. “Thàinig am mart don bhàthaich agam le a thoil fhèin [mas fhìor!] Thug mi grunn sgadan sàillte a-mach à baraille agus cheangail mi iad air bian a’ mhairt. As dèidh beagan làithean, dh’fhalbh a’ ghaoisid dhubh far an robh gach iasg agus, as dèidh làimh, ’s e gaoisid bhàn a dh’fhàs na àite!” Fhuair e a’ mhin!

Turas eile, bha am buachaille a’ tilleadh dhachaigh à Cataibh nuair a chunnaic e mart ann am pàirc leis fhèin. Ach bha earball goirid air. Bha cuideigin air ceann a-mach an earbaill a ghearradh dheth. Thug e am mart leis agus chuir e am falach ann an coille e.

Lorg e seiche mairt agus gheàrr e an t-earball dhith. Cheangail e sin gu cùramach air earball a' mhairt aige, agus dh'fhalbh e leis a dh'ionnsaigh an aiseig thar Caolas Dhòrnaich. Nuair a bha am bàta an impis falbh, leum duine mòr – tuathanach – air bòrd. Chaidh e a dh'ionnsaigh a' mhairt is thug e sùil gheur air.

“Chaill mi mart o chionn trì latha,” thuirt e, “agus mura b' e gu robh earball fada aig an fhear sin, chanainn gur e sin am fear agamsa.”

“Ach 's ann leamsa a tha e,” fhreagair am buachaille.

Choimhead an tuathanach air a' mhart a-rithist. “Tha mi deimhinne gur e seo am fear agamsa, ach gu bheil earball fada air.”

Leis a sin, thug am buachaille sgian a-mach, gheàrr e an t-earball gu lèir dheth, agus thilg e anns a' mhuir e. “A-nise,” thuirt e ris an tuathanach, “mionnaich gur ann leat-sa a tha e!” Ach cha b' urrainn dha, leis gu robh an fhianais air a dhol air falbh leis an t-sruth.

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Faclan na seachdaine: bàillidh: *factor*; oighreachd: *estate*; buachaille: *herdsman*; slaoightear: *rogue, dishonest rascal*; beartach: *wealthy*; mart: *cow or bullock raised for beef*; breac: *speckled, spotted*; bàthach: *byre*; gaoisid: *mammalian hair as on cow or horse (also human hair not on the head)*; Cataibh: *Sutherland*; pàirc: *grassy field*; earball: *tail*; seiche mairt: *cow's skin*; gu cùramach: *carefully*; Caolas Dhòrnaich: *Dornoch Firth*; deimhinne: *certain*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: cha do dh'fhàgadh ainm air a shon: *a name was not left for him*; air sgàth 's nach do dh'fhàs am bàrr gu math air a' bhliadhna roimhe: *because the crop(s) did not grow well the year before*; dh'iarra e air min a thoirt dha air creideas: *he asked him to give him meal on credit*; dè an gnothach a b' fheàrr is a b' ealanta a rinn thu a-riamh?: *what is the best and most skilful business you ever did?*; bha mart a dh'ith ort an uairsin: *you had need of a beast then*; 's e an aon bheathach a bh' anns na dhà: *both of them were the same animal*; thabhann e bolla mine dha, an asgaidh, nan innseadh e sin dha: *he offered him a boll of meal, free of charge, if he would tell him that*; le (a) thoil fhèin [mas fhìor]: *of its own volition [if you believe that]*; thug mi grunn sgadan sàillte a-mach à baraille: *I took a few salted herring out of a barrel*; cheangail mi air bian a' mhairt iad: *I tied them to the bullock's hide*; bha cuideigin air ceann a-mach an earbaill a ghearradh dheth: *somebody had cut the distal end of the tail off*; chuir e am falach ann an coille e: *he hid it in a wood*; nuair a bha am bàta an impis falbh: *when the boat was about to leave*; thug e sùil gheur air: *he examined it closely*; mionnaich gur ann leat-sa a tha e: *swear it is yours*; leis gu robh an fhianais air a dhol air falbh leis an t-sruth: *as the evidence had gone with the current*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdaine: Chan eil fhios a'm co-dhiubh 's e min-choirce neo min-eòrna a bh' ann, agus chan eil e gu diofar don sgeulachd co-dhiù: *I don't know whether it was oatmeal or barley meal, and it doesn't make a difference to the story anyway. Do you notice the different spellings of co-dhiubh and co-dhiù (although, to be honest, the two are often mixed up)? The first is a conjunction, used to mean “whether”, as in a choice between two things. Bidh mi ann co-dhiubh bhios i tioram neo fliuch (I will be there whether it is dry or wet). The second is an adverb, used in several types of circumstance. For example, it can stand for “anyway, whatever”. Chan eil sin gu diofar dhomh – thèid mi ann co-dhiù (that doesn't matter to me – I'll go anyway). Sometimes you will hear it at the tail end of a conversation eg Co-dhiù, chan eil math dhomh a bhith a' gearain – tha obair agam ri dhèanamh (anyway, there's no point in complaining – I've got work to do). It can also mean “at least”. Bidh iad ann, neo co-dhiù bidh Màiri ann (they'll be there, or at least Mary will be there).*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: mura b' e gu robh earball fada aig an fhear sin, chanainn gur e sin am fear agamsa: *if it wasn't [for the fact] that that one has a long tail, I would say that it is my one.*

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